

THE SHADOW BOX

By: Michael Cristofer

Cast

The Interviewer

Joe

Steve

Maggie

Brian

Mark

Beverly

Agnes

Felicity

There are five different stages that a person will go through when he faces the fact of his own death: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages will last for different periods of time, they will replace each other, or exist at times side by side . . . But the one thing, that usually persists through all these stages is hope.

~E. Kubler-Ross, M.D.

Joe = DC
INT. = BEHIND
SCRM

Interviewer: Joe? Can you hear me?

• Joe: What? Sure.

• Interviewer: Good. ~~Have a seat Joe.~~

#1
Joe: What? Oh yeah. I get it.

Interviewer: Yes.

Joe: You can see me, but I ... can't see you.

Interviewer: Yes.

Joe: Well, how do I look?

Interviewer: ~~Have a seat, Joe.~~

Joe: That bad, huh? . . . ~~You got people watching?~~

Interviewer: ~~Yes.~~ Just relax.

Joe: Fire away.

Interviewer: You seem to be in very good spirits today.

Joe: My family is coming.

Interviewer: Have you seen the cottage?

• Joe: It's beautiful. • ~~They're going to love it.~~

Interviewer: Good.

* Joe: Maggie takes a while to get used to things. She'll love it, though.

Interviewer: Good.

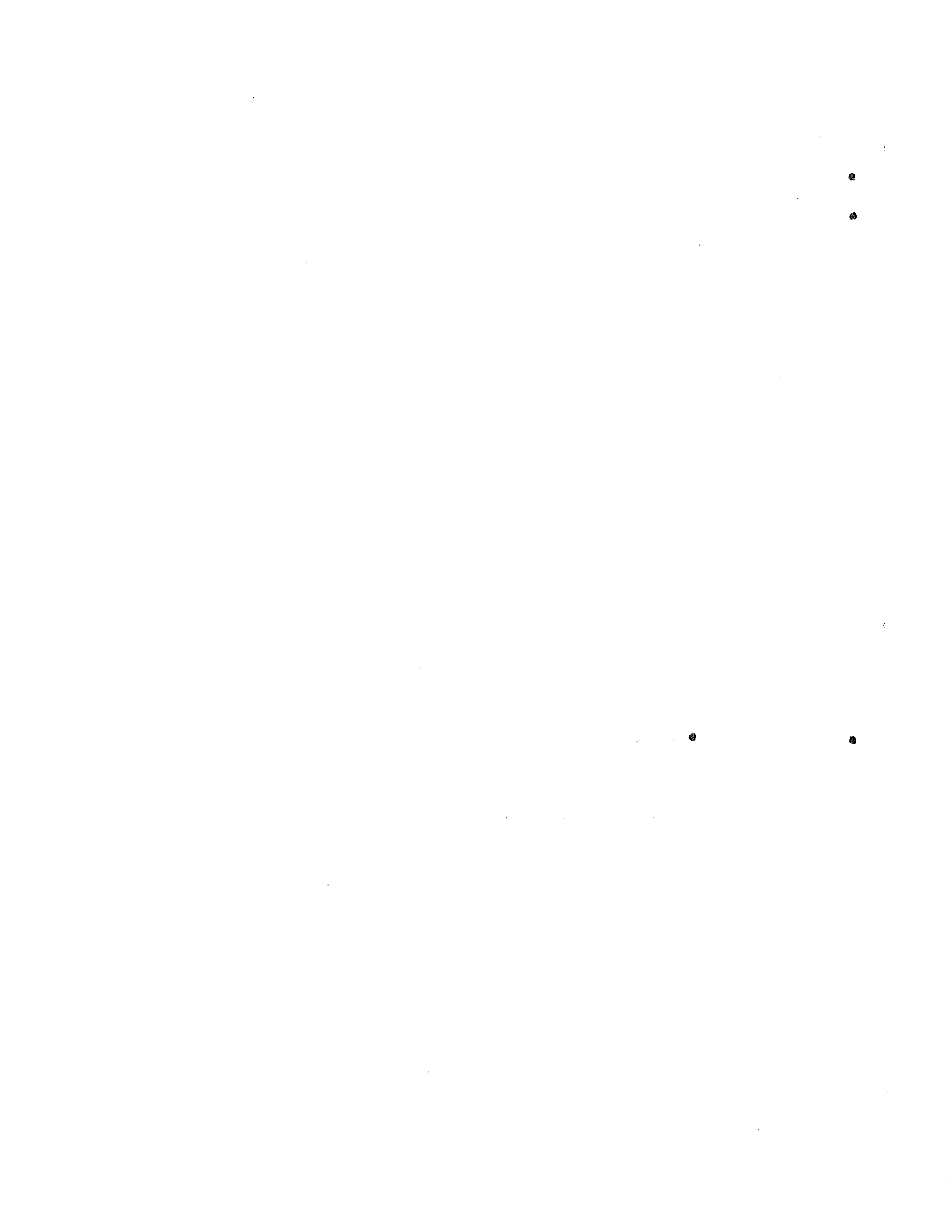
Joe: ~~It just takes her a little time.~~

Steve: Over here. BL

*2
Maggie: Stephen!

Interviewer: ~~Then everything is settled, right?~~

Joe: ~~Maggie knows the whole setup.~~



Interviewer: And your son?

Joe: Steve? I told Maggie to tell him. I figured he should know before he got here. It's not an easy thing.

Steve: Come on, Mom.

Maggie: Give me a chance to catch my breath.

Interviewer: You seem fine.

Joe: Yeah, sure. But Maggie...

Maggie: What number did you say it was?

Steve: Number one.

Joe: You get scared at first. And then you get pissed off. Oh, is that all right to say?

Interviewer: Yes, Joe.

Steve: Look at all these trees!

Joe: Plenty pissed off. I'm glad to just say it. You get tired of keeping it all inside. Nobody wants to hear it. But then, you get used to it...I guess...

Steve: Come on, Mom! RUN ON

Joe: There's still a few things...

Maggie: You're going to give me a heart attack.

Joe: I could talk to you about them...maybe later.

Interviewer: Alright, Joe. We won't keep you. If you need anything...

Joe: Thanks. We'll be all right.

Interviewer: That's it. Unless you have something.

Steve: Dad?

Maggie: Stephen?

Joe: I ... uh... no. No. I guess not.

Interviewer: All right, then. Thank you, Joe.



Steve: This it! INTO COTTAGE LEFT SIDE (TREES)

Joe: Oh, yeah. I want to thank you for making all this possible. Hello?

Steve: He's not here. Quick

• Joe: You still there? Well, I'd better be getting back. TURN UR

Steve: Mom? STEVE

Joe: Stephen? OUT OF COTTAGE

#3 (Steve does a little dance, runs to his Father and embraces him.)

Joe: There you are ... I been waiting all day.

Steve: We been traipsing around the whole place...

Joe: Where's your mother?

Maggie: Joe? Stephen, is that your father?

Steve: I brought my guitar. Wait till you hear? Mom! Over here! So many trees...

Maggie: Joe?

Steve: (Hugs his father.) You okay?

Joe. I'm great.

Steve: I was worried. I missed you. Come on. I'll show you the guitar. It was pretty cheap. I ripped off the case, so that didn't cost anything. GET INTO COTTAGE

#4 Maggie: End of the line. Everybody off. Steve? Joe? The jackass is here! Come and get your luggage! Stephen?

Steve: Hey, Mom, come on in.

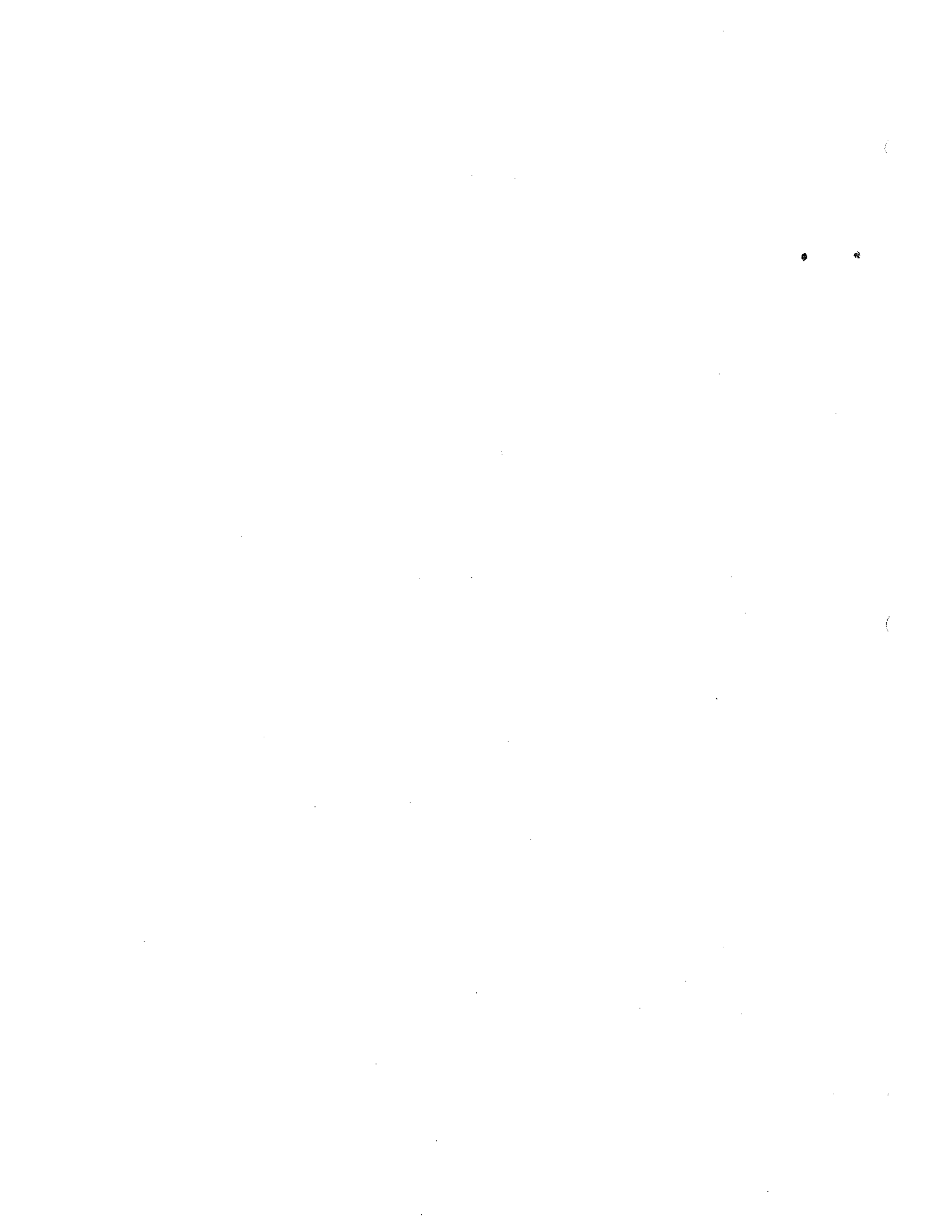
Maggie: I'm not coming in. You're coming out. And don't give me...

Joe: (Say the line with her.) ...and don't give me any smart back talk or I'll split your lip. (Quick breath out on a laugh.)

Maggie: (Exhale slowly.) Well ... I brought you some things ...

Joe: We'll take them inside ...

Maggie: No ... Steve'll get them.



Joe: Let me look at you, huh?

Maggie: You can put things ...

Joe: How are you, Maggie?

Maggie: Oh, fine, I brought the newspapers, some cookies. The airplane made me sick. All those clouds. It looked like you could walk on them. I wanted to throw up. Where did I put ...

Joe: Come on inside.

Maggie: No, I don't want to go inside.

Joe: Huh? Why not?

Maggie: I don't ... I'll see it.

Joe: But...

Maggie: How do I look? It's a new dress.

Joe: You look real pretty. ... You must be tired, huh?

Maggie: Yeah. I don't know.

Joe: Come on in. You can rest.

Maggie: One minute you're there. The next minute you're here. I still feel like I'm there. Oh, yeah, I made a ham ...

Joe: What?

Maggie: A ham. We can have it for lunch.

Joe: You carried a ham three thousand miles across the country?

Maggie: No, I put it under the seat.

Joe: We *got* everything we need. I told you.

Maggie: I don't remember. I'll take it back with me ...

Joe: No. It's fine. It's all right. What the hell are we talking about?

Maggie: They said to come and bring Steve. That's all. At first I thought that was it. Then I got your letter and you sound fine and I talk to you ... so, I ...

Joe: I missed you, Maggie. I missed you real bad.

Maggie: Don't make me feel so stupid. I don't know anything. I just know what I see.

Joe: Maggie ...

★ Maggie: You look real good. You're all right now, huh?

Joe: Maggie, listen ...

Maggie: No. It's all right. You don't have to tell me. I can see it. You're fine. It's all right now. I knew it would be when I got here.

Joe: Yes, Maggie. Everything's all right.

Maggie: I knew it.

#5 Brian: ... people don't want to let go. Do they?

Interviewer: How do you mean, Brian?

Brian: They think it's a mistake, they think it's supposed to last forever. No matter what – sooner or later – it's going to happen. You're going to die. ... and that's a relief – if you think about it.

Interviewer: I'm not sure I follow you.

Brian: Well, the trouble is that most of us spend our entire lives trying to *forget* that we're going to die. And some of us even succeed. Am I being helpful?

Interviewer: Very.

Brian: Well, I don't see how. Too much thinking and talking. My former wife once said to me, 'We've done enough thinking. Couldn't we just dance for a few years?'

Interviewer: Did you?

Brian: No. I have lousy feet. Instead, I started going on about the history of dance ... and before I finished the first paragraph, she was gone ... ~~I became totally irrational. I blamed her, damned her, hated her ... missed her. I began to realize what she was talking about. I'd lost the magic of it. The universe ... it's a miracle. That is a reason for dancing, isn't it?~~

Interviewer: What happened to her?

Brian: Beverly? Oh, she's still dancing as far as I know.

Interviewer: I see.

Brian: She must be very happy. ~~I'm sure of that.~~ Otherwise, she would have come back.

Interviewer: You seem to have everything very well thought out.

* Brian: Well, I think it's important to be sensible. Otherwise you lose track of what it's all about.

Interviewer: How is Mark?

Brian: ~~Speaking of the miraculous~~ ... Well, he's fine.

Mark: Brian?

#6 Interviewer: He's welcome to come and talk to us if he likes.

Brian: Well, we've talked a lot about it already. Generally, we have the same opinion on the subject. How long have I been babbling?

Interviewer: There's no hurry.

Brian: Not for you, maybe. Some of us are on a tighter schedule.

Interviewer: I am sorry. I didn't mean ...

Brian: *(Gets up to leave)* It's all right. You mustn't take all of this too seriously. I don't ... no matter what they tell you ... you always think you have more time. And you don't.

Brian: Tomorrow, then?

Interviewer: Tomorrow.

#7 Beverly: Surprise! Oh, ... I'm sorry. I'm looking for Brian ... uh ... They said cottage two. I must have ...

Mark: No, you didn't ...

Beverly: I didn't?

Mark: No. This is cottage two.

Bev: Oh.

Mark: Yes.

Bev: Is ... uh ...

Mark: No. But he should be back any minute.

Bev: Good. I wanted to surprise him and he's not here. Well ... surprise! *(Walks around cottage)* Hmm. Very nice. Amazing what you can do with a coffin if you put your mind to it.

Mark: What?!?

Bev: Oh, sorry. Introductions first. That way you'll know who you're throwing out. I'm Beverly. No doubt you've ...

Mark: Yes ... Brian's wife.

Bev: Ex-wife.

Mark: Former.

Bev: Yes. Former wife. He prefers former, doesn't he?

Mark: Yes. I figured it was you.

Bev: You did?

Mark: Yes.

Bev: And you're ...uh ...

Mark: Mark.

Bev: Great. Well ... now that we know who we are ... how about a drink?

Mark: A what?

Bev: A drink.

Mark: Oh, no. We don't keep any liquor here.

Bev: No. *I* was inviting *you*. I had an accident with the Scotch on the way out here. There's quite a dent in it. We both look like we could use a little. Hmm?

Mark: No. I don't drink.

Bev: Ah, a dope man.

Mark: Neither. Anyway, it's not really the time or place, is it?

Bev: Oh, I don't know.

Mark: Well, if you feel you have to...

Bev: No. I don't *need* it. I mean, I ... forget it. How is he?

Mark: Dying. How are you?

Bev: Oooooops. Let's start again. Is he feeling any pain?

Mark: Are you?

Bev: Strike two. Well, I think we've got it all straight now. He's dying. I'm drunk. And you're pissed off. Did I leave anything out?

Mark: I think that just about covers it.

Bev: Tell me. How is he?

Mark: Hard to say. One day he's flat on his ass, the next day he's running around like a two year old. But he is terminal – officially. There's some pain. ~~But it's tolerable. At least he makes it seem tolerable.~~ He's very pale. And he has fainting spells. ~~They're harmless. But it's embarrassing for him because he falls down a lot and his face gets a little purple for a minute.~~ . . .

Bev: All the details. You're very graphic.

Mark: I just want you to know. If you're staying around. I mean, I think it would hurt him if people noticed.

Bev: Well, if he turns purple and falls on the floor, it'd be sort of difficult not to notice, wouldn't it?

Mark: Look, I don't mean to be rude or stupid about this ...

Bev: Why not? I like people to be rude and stupid. It's one of the ways you can be sure they're still alive. Oh dear, I did it again, didn't I?

Mark: Yes. You will be careful, won't you?

Bev: About what?

~~Mark: That's exactly what I mean. You've very stoned, dressed in funny clothes, and saying funny things but I'm just not sure what you're doing here.~~

Bev: Neither am I. You sure you wouldn't like a drink?

Mark: Positive. Look, don't you think it'd be better if you came back some other time, like tomorrow or next year or something?

Bev: I'd just have to get drunk all over again.

Mark: He's had a very bad time of it and any kind of, well, disturbance ...

~~Bev: Such as me? Oh, you'll get used to it. You just have to think of me as your average tramp.~~

Mark: . . . You don't seem to be understanding a damn word I'm saying.

Bev: No. I am. You know, you don't *look* like a faggot.

Mark: Oh, for . . .

Bev: No, I mean . . . I didn't expect . . .

* Mark: Well, you'll get used to it.

Bev: Good. Now we're getting someplace. Are you sure you wouldn't like a drink?

Mark: *No!* I would not like a drink. *You* have a drink. Have two. Take off your clothes. Make yourself at home. When you're ready to throw up, the bathroom is in there.

Bev: Hey!

Steve: Hey!

* Maggie: Here. You take this stuff inside. And keep the noise down.

Joe: Come on in, Maggie. I'll show . . .

Maggie: No. I want to stay outside. It's nice.

Steve: I'll get my guitar... (*Exits.*)

Maggie: Stephen, you help me with this . . .

Joe: Ah, leave him be. I'll get this.

Maggie: No, you rest. Stephen!

Joe: I can get it.

Maggie: There's no sense pushing it, huh? Stephen!

Joe: Wait till you see the whole valley. All squared off and patched up with farms like a quilt.

Steve: They got farms?

~~Maggie: Stephen, take this bag inside.~~

~~Steve: We never did get our farm. We should do that, get that farm.~~

Maggie: Don't start on the farm. It always ends up bad when you start on the farm.

Steve: We could sit out every night, singing and howling at the moon.

Maggie: Stephen, be quiet. Where do you think you are?

Steve: Aren't you ever coming in?

Maggie: I'll go in when I'm good and ready. *(Steve exits.)*

Joe: It might have worked, Maggie. See me all dressed up in coveralls.

Maggie: It's a lot of work.

Joe: It's good for you.

Maggie: Milk the cows, clean the chicken coop. Chickens and pigs. *(Steve enters.)*

Joe: You get used to all that ...

Maggie: Here, Stephen. It's the last one.

Steve: You would too have liked it. Kiss a few pigs ... It'd change your whole disposition ...

Maggie: Cut it out! Stephen!

Steve: Come on inside, Chicken Lady. I'll show you the roost!

Joe: Come on, Maggie. We got you.

Maggie: Joe ... ! No ... I don't ... !

Steve: Chickens and pigs! Chickens and pigs!

Joe: Come on inside, Maggie.

Maggie: No ... I don't ... want to go inside ... No ... ! Joe! *(Slaps Steve.)*

Steve: I'm going inside to practice ... There's a ... there's a whole lot I got to tell you. We can talk, huh?

Joe: Sure. *(Steve exits.)* Maggie?

Maggie: I didn't tell him.

Joe: Maggie. What's the matter with you? He thinks I'm going home with you? Why didn't you tell him?

Maggie: I couldn't.

Joe: Why not?

Maggie: Because ... it isn't true. ~~It isn't true.~~ It isn't ...

Interviewer: ... but you don't have to talk to us if you don't want to ... Felicity? We can wait until tomorrow. Felicity? Why don't we wait, and later if you feel ...

#9
Felicity: Piss poor.

Interviewer: What?

Felicity: Your attitude. It's a piss poor way to treat people.

Interviewer: Please...

Felicity: You want to talk? "I feel fine." ~~Is that what you want to hear?~~ I feel fine, there's no pain, I'm as blind as I was yesterday, my bowels are working – and that's all I've got to say about it.

Interviewer: We're only trying to help. . . (Pause)

Felicity: ~~Have you got your friends out there again? All come to look at the dead people.~~

Interviewer: Felicity...

Felicity: ~~Why don't you go hide yourself out there with the rest of them?~~

Interviewer: ~~Would you like me to ... ?~~

Felicity: ~~No.~~ (Beat) How do I look today?

Interviewer: ~~Are you tired, Felicity?~~ You look fine.

Felicity: ~~No.~~ You're a liar. I look like I feel. I smell bad, too. (Turn away.)

Interviewer: Do you want to talk some more today?

Felicity: ~~No.~~ ... Claire ...

Interviewer: ~~Do you want to go back to the cottage? What?~~
... my daughter, Claire ...

#10
Felicity: ~~No.~~ Agnes!

Interviewer: Mrs. Thomas ... ?

Felicity: Claire has two children, now. Two beautiful, twin angels ... Agnes! Agnes has me.

Agnes: Yes, mama. I'm coming.

Felicity: She's a little slow. It's not her fault. She takes after her father. Is she here yet?

Agnes: Yes, mama. I'm here.

~~Felicity: Get me out of here.~~

Felicity: You be careful of Agnes. She's jealous.

Agnes: Mama ... please.

Felicity: Get me out of here.

Agnes: Same time tomorrow?

* Interviewer: Yes. And if you have time, Agnes, we'd like to talk to you.

Agnes: Me?

Felicity: We'll see about tomorrow.

Agnes: All right.

Felicity: Agnes ...!

Agnes: Yes, mama.

Bev: ~~Care! Not old lady!~~ Vieni qua! *Dear! Loved!*
Come here!

#11 Brian: Beverly!

Bev: He even remembers my name! What a mind!

Brian: What a picture!

Bev: All my medals! I wore as many of them as I could fit.

Brian: Fantastic. What a surprise! I'm so happy you've come. Where's Mark? Have you met him?

Bev: Oh, yes. He's beautiful. A little cool, but I'm sure there's a heart in there somewhere.

Brian: Where is he?

Bev: Well ... he's gone. I made a very sloppy entrance. I think he left in lieu of punching me in the mouth.

Brian: I don't believe it.

Bev: It's true. But I do like him.

Brian: Good. So do I.

Bev: You *are* happy, aren't you?

Brian: Ecstatic! I'm even writing again.

Bev: You couldn't be *that* happy! You're a terrible writer, and you know it.

Brian: When they told me I was on the way out ... so to speak ... I realized that there was a lot to do that I hadn't done yet.

Bev: Doing what?

Brian: Everything ... ~~novels, stories, painting~~ ... I learned to drive.

~~Bev: A car?~~

~~Brian: Yes.~~

Bev: Good grief.

Brian: I never miss a dawn or a sunset. I say and do everything that comes into my head. I even sent letters to everyone I know and told them exactly what I think of them ... just so none of the wrong people show up for the funeral. ~~Leave absolutely nothing behind.~~ That's not too much to ask, is it? *I want it all used up.*

Bev: No.

Brian: It shows. Doesn't it?

Bev: You're shaking.

Brian: all this ... is easy. Pain, discomfort ... that's all part of living. The last moment...that's the hard part, that last fraction of a second I can't seem to fit that moment into my life ... Nothing you can do ... except give in.

~~X~~ Bev: That's how I felt the first time I lost my virginity.

Brian: I've missed your foolishness.

Bev: You hated my foolishness.

Brian: I never understood it.

Bev: Neither did I. But it was the only way I knew.

Agnes: (*Singing*)

Holy God, we praise thy name
Lord of all, we bow before Thee ...

Felicity: What the hell is that?

Agnes: It's a hymn, mama.

Felicity: The time for hymns is when I'm in the coffin. Sing us a song!

Agnes: I don't think I know anything ...

Felicity: *(Singing)*

'Roll me over, in the clover,
Lay me down, roll me over, do it again ...'

Agnes: Mama, people can hear you.

Felicity:

Do them good.

'This is number one and the fun is just begun.

Lay me down, roll me over, do it again ...'

Agnes: I'll get you some tea.

Felicity: 'This is number two and
his hand is on my shoe.

Lay me down, roll me
over, do it again ...'

Agnes: You should try
to rest, mama. This
medicine does no good
if you exhaust yourself...

Felicity:

'This is number three and
his hand is on my knee.

Lay me down, roll me
over ...

Agnes: We've done
enough singing, now,
mama. I want you to stop.
Please.

Felicity: 'This is number four and ...' I don't remember four. What's four?

Agnes: I don't know, mama. I don't think I know this song.

Felicity: 'This is number five and his hand is on my thigh ...

Agnes: Mama!

Felicity: 'This is number six and his hands are on my ...'

Agnes: Mama!!!! *Stop it!!*

Felicity: Put 'em away. Put 'em away. Shoot 'em and bury them. You can't get good milk from sick cows. Can you?

Agnes. No, mama. You can't.

Felicity: Bursting their bellies, and there's nothing good inside. Just a lot of bad milk. Put 'em away.

Agnes: ... mama ...

* Felicity: Claire? Claire ...?

Agnes: No, mama. It's Agnes.

Felicity: It hurts ...

Agnes: I know, mama ...

Felicity: Make it stop ...

Agnes: Here, mama. ~~I'm just going to make the tea and then I'll read you your letter.~~

Felicity: Where are they now?

#13 Mark: I don't want to talk about it. It doesn't do any good to talk about it. I mean, it's just words. Isn't it?

Maggie: I called home. I told them we got here all right.

Agnes: ~~Mexico~~. They should be passing right through the center of Mexico today.

Brian: I asked one of the doctors why do I shake like this?

Joe: I get dreams now. Every night. I get dreams so big. I never used to dream.

Felicity: Agnes ...!!

Agnes: Yes, mama.

Felicity: When did they say they were coming?

Agnes: Soon.

Brian: Dance with me, Bev.

Bev: My pleasure, sir.

Maggie: Joe?

Joe: We got to tell him, Maggie.

Agnes: Rest, mama ... rest ...

Mark: It'll all be over in a minute. It just seems to take forever.

Evening.

Act II

Brian: Another drink for Beverly and then she can show us her scars.

Bev: Medals! Not scars.

Mark: I don't understand.

Bev: Dancing contests.

Mark: You lost me.

Bev: Look. Peter somebody. Diamonds. Very pure, very idealistic, an architect. *(Tosses all the jewelry around the room or in her bag)*

Brian: To Peter!

Bev: One among many. This one ... a family heirloom and would I join the collection. No, thank you.

Brian: I should hope not.

Bev: Oh ... yes. The Jean Jacques collection. Jean Jacques. Jean Jacques. Jean Jacques. Jean Jacques. You might say I took him for everything he was worth. You'd be wrong. There was a whole lot more I couldn't get my hands on. A big one for Jean Jacques.

Brian: Jean Jacques!

Bev: I tried, Brian. Not one real dancer. Oh... last and least, my favorite dress. A gap here, a stain there. A spilled drink, a catch, a tear ... spots you can hardly see ...

Mark: It looks walked over.

Bev: Over and over again. Stitch it up, tie it up, wrap it up ... it keeps coming back for more.

Mark: That's pathetic.

Brian: Mark!

Mark: I'm sorry. It just came out.

Bev: That's all right.

Mark: It's not all right, ~~it stinks~~.

Bev: Okay. It stinks. Forget it. Here's to all of them.

Mark: I'm going out for a walk. *(Starts to put on jacket)*

Bev: Oh, no. How are we ever going to get to know each other if you keep leaving the room?

Brian: Don't go, Mark.

Bev: Stay. Come on. Please.

Mark: You don't need me here, you've got a captive audience.

Bev: Come on. We'll open the champagne and I'll shut up for a while.

Mark: Thanks, but I already told you ...

Bev: It's good stuff. I only look cheap. Are you sure you wouldn't like ... *(She accidentally spills the contents on Mark.)* a drink?

Mark: No. Thank you.

Bev: I'm sorry. I think I feel an exit coming up.

Brian: You look very beautiful, Beverly. I should have noticed when I walk^{ed} in.

Bev: I'll miss you.

Brian: I'll miss you, too.

Bev: Look what I've done.

Mark: It's all right.

Bev: No. I've ruined it.

Mark: All right. You've ruined it.

Bev: I'll send you another one.

Mark: No, I'll have it cleaned.

Bev: It won't come out.

Mark: Please!

Brian: It's only a jacket. Two sleeves, a collar, a piece of cloth. Why are we wasting this time? ~~Here we stand, the combined energy of our three magnificent minds focused on a jacket.~~ There are more important things I promise you. *(Brian takes Bev in his arms.)* Come on, my beauty, I'll show you a dancer.

Look at Mark

Bev: Brian! Stop! *(Suddenly Brian falters. Breathless, he starts to fall, catches himself, and then falls. Bev goes to him.)* Brian! Are you all ...?

Brian: No! It's all right. He walks, he talks, he falls down, he gets up. Life goes on.

Mark: Let me give you a hand.

Brian: Leave me alone. *(Exits)*

Bev: Do you think ^{you} we should ,,?

Mark: No.

Agnes: I shouldn't stay too long.

Interviewer: Yes. We won't keep you.

~~Agnes: Are there people there?~~

~~Interviewer: Yes.~~

Agnes: What was it you wanted to know?

Interviewer: Well, we wanted to know about Claire.

Agnes: What?

Interviewer: Your sister.

Agnes: Oh, Claire ...

Interviewer: Yes.

Agnes: We were very close ... our family. Especially after my father died. Mama worked very hard to keep us together. We had a dairy farm. And then ... Claire ... there was a boy ... well, she left us ... just like that. She was a lot like Mama. They would fight and yell and throw things at each other ... they got along very well. And then one morning, we received a phone call from Louisiana. There was an accident ... And Claire was dead.

Interviewer: But these letters from Claire?

Agnes: ~~It was~~ after Claire died ~~that~~ Mama started to get sick. The letters ... uh ... It was after one of the last operations. Mama came home from the hospital very happy. She told me she had written a letter while she was in the hospital ... to Claire ... to come visit and bring her children. Of course, no letter came. She started to get worse. She accused me of being jealous and hiding the letters ... I didn't know what to do ... So ...

Interviewer: How long have you been writing these letters?

Agnes: Almost two years ... You're not angry with me, are you?

Interviewer: No.

Agnes: It means so much to her. It's something to hope for. People *need* something to keep them going.

Interviewer: Do they?

Agnes: Yes. It's just so she knows that Claire is coming.

Interviewer: What happens when Claire doesn't show up?

Agnes: Oh, but I don't think ... I mean, Mama ... well ...

Interviewer: You mean she'll probably die before she finds out.

Agnes: Yes.

Interviewer: She has a strong will.

Agnes: Oh, yes. I know that.

Interviewer: Sometimes that's enough to keep a very sick person alive for a long time.

Agnes: But why?

Interviewer: She's waiting for Claire.

Agnes: What ...? What did you say?

Interviewer: It's what we call 'making a bargain.' She's made up her mind that she's not going to die until Claire arrives.

Agnes: No ...

Interviewer: Now that you've explained about the letters ...

Agnes: ...no ... it isn't true ...

Interviewer: Perhaps it isn't ...

Felicity: (*Waking up*) ...Claire ...

Agnes: It isn't wrong to hope ...

Interviewer: Agnes ...?

Agnes: ... waiting for ...

Felicity: ...Claire ...

Agnes: ... no ... she can't do that!

Interviewer: Agnes ...

Agnes: I have to go back ...

Interviewer: Listen ...

Agnes: No!

X Interviewer: Will you come back tomorrow?

Agnes: Tomorrow?

Felicity: ... Put 'em away ...

Agnes: Yes ...

Interviewer: All right, then.

Felicity: ...Claire ...?

Agnes: Mama ... If I told you the truth, would you listen?

Joe: I built the house.

Maggie: Way out in the country ...

Joe: Something to *have*, we said.

Agnes: I don't remember the good times anymore, mama. All I can remember is this ...

Joe: Where does it go?

Agnes: ... pushing and pulling and hurting ...

Maggie: The first two years, nothing worked.

Joe: What do you mean? I built it good, damn good.

Agnes: It all went wrong. What happened, Mama? There must have been a time when I loved you?

(*Mark is drinking...heavily.*)

Bev: He's resting.

Mark: He'll be all right.

Bev: How about you?

Mark: Better every minute.

Bev: You could fool me. Okay. Okay. I'm leaving. You're sure he's all right?

Mark: It's just this dying business, Beverly. It gets a little messy now and then.

Bev: I noticed.

Mark: Did you? Brian ... give him ten minutes and a few thousand words, and he'll make you think dying is the best thing that ever happened to him. ~~Would you like a drink?~~

~~Bev: No.~~

~~Mark: It's all words for Brian. And it's a little hard to keep up. Never mind what it's all about.~~

Bev: That's not fair.

Mark: Isn't it? The way you two have been carrying on ... Dead people are pretty low on my list of funny topics.

Bev: Let's not get angry.

Mark: ... You think you know something. You think you *have* something ...

Joe: More houses, more streets.

Mark: ~~And it all goes crazy, ... everything you had is gone.~~

Maggie: I'm telling you, I don't want to talk about it.

Joe: Alright! We won't talk about it.

Mark: ~~... when I met Brian, I was hustling outside a bar in San Francisco. There I was one night, selling it down on Market Street, and Brian walks up to me and asks me the time. Well, I did my little number about time for what and how much was it worth to him ... And all of a sudden, he starts explaining exactly what time was worth to him ... Philosophy! I thought, I've got a real freak on my hands.~~

Bev: You did.

Mark: And he's talking and talking and finally, I said, 'Look, I haven't eaten in a long time and I'm getting a headache. Why don't we talk some business before I starve to death?'

Bev: What did he do?

Mark: He bought me dinner! I couldn't believe it. I mean, what the hell did he *want* from me? And he never stopped talking.

Bev: And then he left. He didn't want *anything* from you.

Mark: ~~But before he went, I lifted his wallet. The next day I returned it. And that's how I got to know him. He was ... my salvation. We talked ... endlessly. ... Words ... just ... words. We are dying here, lady. Brian looks at me and I can see it in his eyes. You can smell it on him. You can smell it on me. It gets into you. It stays inside you. Inside every word, every touch, every move, every day, every night, it lies down with you and gets in between you. It's sick and putrid and soft and rotten and it is killing me.~~

Bev: It's killing him, too.

Mark: That's right, lady. And some of us have to live with it. You can waltz in and out of here like a Christmas tree if you want to, but some us are staying.

Bev: And some of us wouldn't mind changing places with you at all.

Mark: And some of us just don't care anymore.

Bev: You're cute, Mark. But next to me, you are the most selfish son of a bitch I've ever met.

Mark: Look, don't you think it's time you picked up all your little screwing trophies and went home?

Bev: Way past time. Let me tell you something, as one whore to another – ~~what you do with your ass is your business.~~ ~~But~~ Brian is different. Brian happens to need you. And if that is not enough for you, then you get yourself out of his life –fast.

Mark: That simple, huh?

Bev: Yes. A postcard at Christmas, maybe a phone call ... when it gets really bad ... and you don't remember anymore why ... why you walked out on the one person who said yes. ~~Then you phone, because you need to know that somewhere there is one poor stupid deluded human-being who still believes in you, who cares.~~ Why isn't that ever enough?

Mark: You want an answer to that?

Bev: No. I want you to get yourself together or get yourself away from him.

Mark: I can't.

Bev: Why not?

Mark: He's dying.

Bev: He doesn't need *you* for that. ... What's in it for you?

Mark: Nothing.

Bev: You said it yourself. He's just a tired, sick old man ...

Mark: I didn't say that.

Bev: Yes, you did. Garbage. ~~You don't need that.~~ You don't need to dirty your hands with that kind of rotten, putrid filth. Unless of course you need the money. What does he do – pay you by the month? Or does it depend on how much you put out?

(Mark suddenly hits her in the face. Bev quickly slaps him back – hard. Mark is stunned. Bev hits him again. Mark still doesn't move. Almost as if he doesn't feel anything. Bev continues to slap his face until he connects with the pain. He lets out a cry and breaks down.)

★ Mark: I don't want him to die. I don't ... Please ... *(Puts her arms around him)* I don't want him to die.

Joe: Maggie ...

Maggie: I'm here, Joe. It's all right.

Felicity: Claire ...?

Agnes: Yes, mama ...

Bev: It's all right ...

Felicity: Claire: Yes, mama ... I'm here ...

Maggie: It's all right now ...

Bev: It's all right.

Agnes: It's all right ...

Maggie: Sshh ...

Bev: Hopes, baby. That's what you got. A bad case of the hopes. They sneaked up on you when you weren't looking ...

Felicity: Claire ...?

Maggie: It's all right ...

Agnes: Yes, mama ...

Bev: Just one favor you owe him. ~~Don't hurt him.~~ Don't hurt him with your hope. He needs somebody. (*Mark doesn't answer.*) Yeah. That was my answer, too. 'Bye, baby.

Mark: Wait ...

~~*~~ Bev: No. Tell Brian goodbye for me. ~~I've got a plane to catch.~~ I want to get to Hawaii before the hangover hits. It's funny, he always makes the same mistake. He always cares about the wrong people.

Joe: We got to tell him Maggie.

Maggie: No. I want you to come home.

~~Joe: Maggie ...~~

~~Maggie: Come home, that's all.~~

Joe: I can't.

Maggie: You can. You look fine. I can see it.

Joe: Every day, it gets worse.

Maggie: We'll go home, tomorrow. ~~I got another ticket.~~

Joe: Tomorrow is nothing, Maggie! It's not going to change. You don't snap your fingers and it disappears. It's here. Now.

Maggie: No.

Joe: Look at me, Maggie.

Maggie: No.

Joe: *Look* at me. You want magic to happen? Is that what you want? Go ahead. Make it happen. I'm waiting. ~~Make it happen.~~

Maggie: I can't.

Joe: Make it happen!

Maggie: I can't. ~~I can't.~~

(Steve comes out.)

Steve: Hey, I'm ready to play for you now. ~~If you want to hear?~~

Joe: I'll be right in.

Steve: Mom, I'm sorry.

Maggie: What?

Steve: I didn't mean to upset you.

Maggie: That's okay.

Steve: Yeah?

Maggie: Yeah.

Joe: You get tuned up, and I'll be right in.

Steve: Better hurry up before I lose my nerve. *(Exits)*

Joe: I'm going inside now, Maggie. I'm going to tell him.

Maggie: Tell me first.

Joe: What?

Maggie: Tell me. Say it out loud.

Joe: I'm going to die, Maggie.

Maggie: ... Why?

* Joe: I don't know. ... Come inside.

Maggie: What'll we do in there?

Joe: Try. That's all. Live with it. Look at it. Don't make me do it alone.

Maggie: I can't promise ...

Joe: Don't promise. Just come inside.

(Maggie doesn't move for a long time. Finally, she moves toward the cottage with Joe.)

Brian: I need some help.

Mark: What happened?

Brian: I ... uh ... I fell asleep and I wet the bed.

Mark: Come and sit down.

Brian: I'm embarrassed.

Mark: I'm drunk.

Brian: Pleased to meet you.

(They embrace. Mark helps him off.)

Felicity: Agnes.

Agnes: Yes, mama?

Felicity: ... Did we get any mail today?

Agnes: Yes, mama ...

Felicity: I get so lonesome for Claire ...

Agnes: I know, mama ...

Felicity: Will you read it to me?

Agnes: Yes, mama.

Felicity: I get so lonesome for Claire ...

Agnes: Mama!! (*Silence*)

Felicity: Could you read me the letter, now?

Agnes: Yes. Dear mama, I am writing today from Mexico. Because of some difficulties, we found ourselves stranded today in a beautiful little mountain village called San Miguel ...

Felicity: ...my bright-eyed ... girl ...

Agnes: ... nights ... (*Agnes watches her, making up the words to the letter.*) I can hear the wind blowing ... whispering ... nothing is there ... mama... I think ... I think it's because I miss you ... because it hurts not being close to you ... and ... and touching you ... (*She cannot finish.*)

JK
Felicity: Claire ...

*** - Brian: People don't want to let go. Do they?

Joe: There's a few things – I could talk to you about them ...

Brian: I suppose it's because ...

- Joe: ... you don't expect it to happen.

Brian: You try.

- Mark: You keep thinking, there's got to be some way out of this.

Brian: You want to strike a bargain ... make a deal.

Mark: You don't want to give in.

- Joe: You want to say no.

- Maggie: ... no ...

- Mark: ... no ...

Brian: Your whole life goes by – it feels like it was only a minute.

Bev: You try to remember what it was you believed in.

Mark: What was so important?

Bev: You want to make a difference.

Maggie: You want to blame somebody.

DENIAL

BARGAINING

ANGER

- Brian: You want to be angry.
- Joe: You want to shout, 'Not me!'
- Brian: not me!
- Maggie: Not me!
- Felicity: What time is it, Agnes?
- Agnes: I don't know, mama.
- Brian: And then you think, someone should have said it sooner. ...This living ...
- Mark: ... this life ...
- Bev: ... this lifetime ...
- Brian: It doesn't last forever.
- Maggie: A few days, a few minutes ...
- Brian: It has an end.
- Bev: These things you love.
- Maggie: These children.
- Bev: This smile.
- Brian: It doesn't last forever.
- Joe: It was never supposed to last forever.
- Mark: This day.
- Felicity: What time is it, Agnes?
- Agnes: I don't know, mama. It's time to stop. Please, mama. It's time to stop.
- Brian: These eyes ...
- Mark: These things you see.
- Joe: Yes.
- Mark: Yes.

Brian: These things you hear.

Mark: This noise.

Bev: This music.

Steve: I can play for you now.

Maggie: Yes.

Bev: Yes.

Brian: They tell you you're dying, and you say all right. But if I *am* dying...I must still be alive.

Felicity: What time is it?

Mark: These things you have.

Maggie: Yes.

Joe: This smell, this touch.

Mark: Yes.

Bev: This taste.

Brian: Yes.

Maggie: This breath.

Steve: Yes.

Mark: Yes.

Brian: Yes.

Maggie: Yes.

Bev: Yes.

Joe: Yes.

Brian: This moment. (*Everyone takes a breath, releases. They are frozen in this moment. Lights fade.*)

ACCEPTANCE

